

Postmaster-General to perforate stamps with a proof of ownership. . . The oldest known perforation was found on a one penny red stamp with plate number 74 from the 1858/69 issue (Michel number 16). It consisted of the letters C.D/& Co, and was used by C. Devaus & Co, London.

The following appears on Page 15 of *The Handbook of British Perfins*, Third Edition (corrected) 1988, 500 copies, Perfins Society, 23 Foxfield Close, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 3NU, UK, (c) John S. Nelson 1967:

... the earliest reported is Plate 74 - C.D/& Co, mentioned by Mr. Vallancey in his 1948 booklet. . .

This can now be corrected. In In 1990, I found the the perfin GWR in a one penny red with plate number 71.



The World's Oldest Perfin?

Translation by Gerald E. Soutar of an article in German by , Horst Brandt with appeared in Lochungen, Rundbrief Nr 74, April 1992, publication of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Louchugen im Bund Deutscher Philatelisten e. V. Translation by permission of the author and with the approval of the board of directors of Arbeitsgemeinschaft.

The following appears on Page 5 of our Letter 44 (October 1983) under the title "When was the first German stamp perfinned?":

Joseph Sloper, after lengthy efforts, received permission on March 13, 1868 from the British

The stamp information is: 1d red (Michel number 16)(Scott Catalogue number 33), watermark Michel 3 II (Scot 20), perforated 14, corner letters CA/AC, plate number 71, printing started: March 1, 1864, day of issue: April 1, 1864, perfin GR/W = Great Western Railways Co., canceled with London district black duplex cancel W/52, stamp centering is only fair, with lower right perforation rounded.

I found this stamp in an accumulation of approximately 12,000 Michel number 16 (Scott Catalogue number 33) in very mixed condition which I obtained at auction. It took months to check these stamps,

which were mostly still on paper. I found 31 perfins. I first learned toward the end of 1991 (from *The Handbook of British Perfins*) that since 1948, the earliest known perfin was thought to be in a stamp from plate 74.

In order to be absolutely sure that my stamp is from plate 71, and to eliminate the possibility of error on my part, I checked it against the reconstruction of plate 71. Although the cancellation is very heavy the number of plate 71 appear, by coincidence, between the thick crossbars of the cancellation, and are easily recognized. Both the numbers 71 and the corner letters AC/CA are identical with those of the corresponding stamp in my reconstructed plate 71. To eliminate the possibility of it being plate 171, I made the same comparison with plate 171, and could not find any similarity. In their clear grotesque style, the number of plate 71 are more legible, cleaner, and large than the numbers of plate 171. By 1873, the engravers had significantly more experience in the engraving of these small numbers than in 1861, since twelve years separate the engraving of these two plates. I am convinced that my stamp is from plate 71.

In this connection, it may be helpful to provide some additional information on the term "plate reconstruction." I have collected perfined stamps of all kinds for over 30 years, including those of Great Britain (which are called "perfins" there from perforated initials). These are almost always found in accumulations and large lots of Great Britain. With the passage of time, I had accumulated a large number of stamps without perfins. Many of these were penny reds with the head of Queen Victoria (Michel numbers 3, 8, 10, and 16). Eventually, I decided to try reconstructing both the sheets and the plates, according to the corner letters. With Michel numbers 3, 8, and 10, I limit myself to reconstruction of the sheet, whereby any plate number may appear. Since larger numbers of Michel number 16 are available at auction and otherwise, it is easier to attempt a plate reconstruction, whereby all stamps must have the same plate number.

The sheet of one penny black and red from 1840 contains 240 stamps, consisting of 20 vertical stamps and 12 horizontal stamps. Each sheet costs 240 pence, or one pound sterling. Such a sheet, with margins, is approximately 52 centimeters high and 26 centimeters wide. From the beginning each stamp had a letter in the lower left and right corners. The left corners had the letters A through T, designating the 20 vertical stamps from top to bottom. The right corners had the letters A through L, designating the horizontal stamps from left to right. Thus, the location of each stamp on

the sheet could be identified. With Michel numbers 1, 3, 8, and 10, both upper corners have a star. Starting with Michel number 16, there are letters in all four corners, whereby the letters in the upper corners are identical with the lower corners, but diagonally transposed. Stamps are referred to by the lower corner letters, thus a stamp with the lower corner letters AC is the third stamp on the sheet (third stamp from the left in the top horizontal row).

None of the stamps with Michel numbers 1, 3, 8 and 10 has a plate number because this information was printed in margin for these stamps. Michel number 16, however, has the plate number twice on each stamp in the left and right borders above the corner numbers, more or less legible.

Several hundred plates used between 1840 and 1880 for printing one penny stamps were given numbers starting with 1 on two separate occasions. The likeness of Queen Victoria was changed to Type II in 1855. Michel numbers 1 and 3 exist only in Type I, Michel number 8 in Type I and II, and Michel numbers 10 and 16 only in Type II.

It would be impossible to determine the total number of different one penny stamps. There are at least two different watermarks, three different methods of separation (imperforate, perforated 14, and perforated 16), as well as differences in paper and color shades. There are also re-engravings. There could be as many as 150,000 different stamps. Is it possible that all these varieties are in the British royal family collection, which takes up over 75 square meters of space?

Over 28 million of Michel number 1 were printed between April 15, 1840 and January 15, 1842 from twelve plates. Twelve plates means at least 2,880 different stamps. Michel number 16 was printed from March 1, 1864 until early 1880 (plates 71 through 225). Officially, there were 151 plates, which would mean 36,240 different stamps.

Despite these many varieties, there are collectors who try, with more or less success, to reconstruct the sheets, and, indeed, to reconstruct the plates. In each case, large amounts of both time and money are required. Since the one penny black is so expensive, I did not even try to reconstruct it (to complete a sheet would cost about 50,000 German marks at today's prices!).

It is easier with Michel number 16, which is obtainable in large quantities at auction or otherwise. Independent of the number of stamps available, I make plate reconstructions of this stamp and have completed plate

71, 72, 73, 74, and others. Of course, perfins are included in these reconstructions, but only in very small numbers.

The oldest perfin I am aware of in Queen Victoria stamps is the previously mentioned penny red with corner letters AC from plate 71. In this connection, it must be remembered that stamps of this issue from plates 71-74, 76, and 78-106 (plate 75 does not exist and plate 77 is extremely rare) were available (or had already been on sale) at post offices by March 13, 1868, when Joseph Sloper received permission to perforate stamps as proof of ownership. Most had probably already been used up before March 13, 1868. Plate 103 was sent to press August 8, 1866, and plate 104 on January 22, 1868. Perforated stamps through plate 103 can only be remainders still on hand which were perforated later (which explains their scarceness).

The predecessors of perfins are also worth mentioning. These are the overprints and underprints used by firms and organizations to identify their stamps. These were printed mainly on the backs of the stamps, and according to the Michel catalog, were in use until 1882. In the five cases illustrated below, the printing was applied officially to the back of the sheet of stamps before the gum was applied.

J. & C.
BOYD & CO.
7 FRIDAY ST.
COPESTAKE,
MOORE,
CRAMPTON & CO.,
London,



These printings are usually still legible after the stamps have been soaked off the paper. The private printings, on the other hand, were made on the gum itself, and disappear or at least are damaged when the stamp is soaked off the paper.

These printings are described in greater detail in the Stanley Gibbons specialized catalog (*Great Britain, Volume 1, Queen Victoria*, 9th edition, 1989, Annex 2, "Protective Overprints or underprints"). The catalog lists 68 different overprints/under-prints, but there are more.

G. E. R.

W. H. SMITH
AND SON,
164, STRAND.



Most of these protective printings appear on the penny red (Michel number 16), but they are also found on Michel number 10 (Scott Catalog numbers 14 and 16)(from 1885?) and even on Michel number 65 (Scott 88 and 89)(till 1882?).

Ed's note: This article and a number of letters to the Editor regarding the "World's Oldest Perfin?" have appeared in *The Perfin Society Bulletin*. Interested members may borrow back copies of *The Perfins Society Bulletin* from the Perfin Club's Library.

Check Punches

John F. Lyding (LM106)

Photocopies of checks from 1998 and 1900 that have interesting "punches" are shown on the back cover. The upper check is drawn on The First National Bank of Cooperstown, NY for \$15.80. It has a cut punch with that amount in the center top. This check also has a 2¢ red Battleship documentary stamp on the upper right. The stamp is tied to the check by a date cancel and the Chase National Bank "PAID" shield.

The second check, drawn on The First National Bank of Bainbridge, NY for \$849.89 has a perforation cancel with \$848* in the upper left. Both instruments are marked "To Chase National Bank, New York". I assume that this must be the correspondent bank and/or clearing house of the original bank or perhaps these were "bank checks" because both are signed by "Cashier".